

## THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND

582 (Exceptions to this occur in the case of men who have several  
[595] wives, their later acquisitions being sometimes much younger than the husbands.) It will be remembered that parallel cousins are classed with siblings, with whom marriage is forbidden, and that cross-cousins (*pi'dn*) are taboo relatives, marriage between whom, though falling short of incest, is viewed with decided disapproval, and this although the individuals belong to different clans. These restrictions, taken together, rule out marriages between all the people who appear in the tables of relationship terms. It follows that a man's wife must be chosen from outside his relations on both sides of the house. As a matter of fact, the more distant extensions of the terms are not always kept in mind, especially if the people concerned live in a far-off village, so that if all the genealogies were followed back for another generation or two, intermarriages would doubtless be brought to light. But these would be incidental, and would not invalidate the system as here described, since the relationships are not considered by the individuals concerned in arranging the marriage. Intermarriages between relatives do occasionally occur, but the amount of care taken to impress upon me that they were irregular, in such examples as I came across, shows that they are never taken as a matter of course. Some of these have already been mentioned. Another, possessing unusual features, is perhaps worth detailing at some length.

582 A girl named Pariban fell in love with a young man named  
588 Paribuin, and persuaded him to have intercourse with her in the  
bush. The two were caught, and there was great consternation on  
[836] the part of their elders, because they stood to each other in the relationship of *wetnē*- owing to the fact that their maternal grandmothers were sisters. Finally they were permitted to marry in spite of this. But the rest of the lineage group were very angry, and in revenge Sarumpots, the grandson of another sister, seized Gomar, the (actual) sister of Paribuin (to whom he stood in exactly the same relation as Paribuin did to Pariban), while she was working in the taro garden, and forced her to have intercourse with him. When it was settled that Paribuin was to be allowed to marry Pariban, Sarumpots married Gomar, but great stress was laid by my informants on the fact that this marriage would not have been possible had it not been for the other. Once these marriages had taken place the matter was considered regularized, and on Paribuin's death without children Pariban duly became the wife of  
[839] [i.e., marriages generally being with mates of the same generation. — Analyst]

## MARRIAGE AND SEX RELATIONS

99

it is not the woman that is bought, but the right to use her body for the satisfaction of the husband and the procreation of children by him. With this the man also acquires the right to be looked after and provided with food properly prepared, and failure on the part of the wife in these respects is regarded as ground for divorce. It is a wife, as distinct from a woman in her capacity as an individual, that is purchased when the strings of ceremonial currency pass from the bridegroom's family to that of the bride. She is not thereby prevented from being a person with rights of her own in the community, for her position in this society is far from being a negligible one, as will be seen from other portions of this book. My impression is that while they definitely regard the handing over of the ceremonial currency as a commercial transaction, it is not in any way detrimental to the dignity of the woman, nor does this point of view react unfavourably on her status in the community.

## RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SEXES PRIOR TO MARRIAGE

It will be noted that there is no feature in the series of betrothal ceremonies, nor in the final ceremony preceding the consummation of the marriage, involving a test of the girl's virginity. The question was never brought up spontaneously by the natives in our conversations regarding various aspects of sex and marriage, and the lack of response to such guarded inquiries as I made—direct questions being liable to produce misleading results—would seem to indicate that the matter is not considered of primary importance. It is noteworthy, too, that out of several hundred folk-tales and legends in my collection not a single one has any bearing on this point, though practically every other aspect of the sexual life is illustrated therein. Two cases of rape occur in my records, but both were attended by special circumstances. One, complicated by incest, has already been discussed (p. 77). The other (referred to on p. 230) concerned a girl who had attained adult years without being married owing to a deformity. Perhaps the fact that in the past it was only exceptionally that a girl was not claimed by a husband at or before sexual maturity accounts for the absence of stress on the subject. Nowadays, in the more sophisticated villages, where the age of marriage is getting appreciably later, and some freedom of choice as to whether a girl marries or not is just possible, a new situation is arising. In the few such cases known

836 to me—there were none at Kurtatchi—the unmarried girls indulged in amours as freely as their married contemporaries, but, like them, were desirous of avoiding pregnancy, fearing that they would then be under some difficulty in obtaining a husband later. But in places where there has been little white contact, I incline to think, though the evidence bearing on the point is rather inferential than direct, that pre-marital intercourse is not, and never has been, prevalent among these natives, to any great extent, in respect of either males or females.

832 In this area the relations between the sexes before marriage must be considered in the light of two circumstances which have  
834 a very definite influence upon them. The first is the elaborate hedge of taboos and restrictions surrounding the boys wearing the *upi*, that is to say, all the boys between the ages of about ten and about eighteen. These regulations are—or were at the time of my visit—still strictly binding, or, if broken, so much care is taken that the delinquents are seldom found out. Their effect is to keep the boys completely away from the women and girls, from which it follows that sexual advances are forbidden. One or two cases were reported to me of boys indulging in sexual intercourse while still wearing the *upi*, but they were spoken of with bated breath, and clearly considered very great enormities and quite exceptional.

[634] This, I believe, indicates the actual position and was not merely the statement of the conventional standpoint. In the olden days, discovery would have been punished with death for both parties.

582 The second factor to be considered is that boys, and more especially girls, are generally betrothed while still quite small  
[164] children. I was told of girls who had been betrothed 'before they had yaws', which indicates that they were hardly more than a year old, since this tropical skin disease falls to the lot of practically

584 every child about the age of one or two years. My informants told me that the match was generally arranged by the boy's father, but in practice I found that it was just as likely to be the boy's mother's brother who took the initiative, and that other people also might, and often did, take a hand in the matter. One day, while I was visiting the village of Tabut, a man from Ruri came over to see if he could get a certain young woman as a wife for his sister's son. He was prepared to give two strings of *imun* and some *beroon*, the amount of which he did not state. She was married to a man who is working at Timputs, but he said the man had divorced her,

the children accompany the mother. In south Bougainville and on the islands of the Bougainville Strait the wife of the deceased remains in the community; frequently the dead man's brother marries the widow; but if he is not so inclined or is already sufficiently provided with wives, the widow can marry another native if he pays the dead man's brother the customary purchase price. 768 768 171

[8] The chieftains normally have several wives; the number varies from five to fifty and even more. The common people have one, two or three wives, but rarely more. Male slaves may not marry. 595 622 567

The women are treated relatively well; to be sure, they have to do a great part of the field work, but they are not slaves to the same extent as on the other Solomon Islands. Also their morality is on a far higher plane than elsewhere in the group. Promiscuous intercourse among unwedded people does not take place to the extent that it does, for example, on St. Christoval and on Guadalcanar; strict propriety is insisted upon in marriage. The wives frequently have a decisive influence on the conduct of their husbands, and I have often had occasion to observe that once you are on good terms with the wives, the husbands regulate their behavior accordingly. Gifts distributed to a few old women often have better success than all arts of persuasion. The chieftain's wives have an even better life; many of them do nothing at all; they keep their husband and company when he is at home and do various kinds of handwork. Some see to it that the plantations always supply the requisite amount of foodstuffs, but only when the husband condescends to work in the plantation with his own hands do all of his better halves accompany him. When he goes on war expeditions the whole group stays at home under the surveillance of a few of the older men who are unfit for battle. One of the chieftain's wives is designated as chief wife, and her male children are the actual heirs of the chieftain. When individual communities live on islands too small to support plantations and produce the needed amount of food, it is the wives' job to keep up market trade with the wealthier neighboring districts. Early in the morning you can see them going to the market in large and small boats, usually accompanied by an older man who probably has the duty of supervisor, since a single old man is scarcely able to provide any sort of effective protection in case of an enemy attack. 562 836 171 837 622 595